To,   Oct 16, 2015

Instructional Quality Commission,
History-Social Science SMC
c/o Thomas Adams, Executive Director
1430 N Street, Suite 3207
Sacramento, CA 95814
e-mail: hssframework@cde.ca.gov.

Subject: Edits to the 6th grade portion of the revised draft narrative framework.

I and many Hindus in California are very disappointed to find that the revised draft narrative framework is actually retrogressive with major issues of portrayal of Hinduism and Indian civilizations such as, misinformation about Hindu social structure, description about Hindu traditions and practices, also presenting the conjecture of Aryan invasion as if it is factual. 'Caste' in large part was the complaint in my letter to the Commission on 'Portrayal of Hinduism in 6th grade" for which I have collected well over 2500 signatories and given enough in-person testimonies of bullying and abuse faced by our children due to insensitive and incorrect portrayal in the framework. It seems as though you have completely ignored our significant input as in the revised draft you have increased portions with incorrect and negative portrayal of Hinduism - specifically 'Caste' and Aryan invasion.

The impact of the revised narrative is that of all the religions only Hinduism is singled out for a portrayal based on interpretations that are entirely foreign to it, from view of those that are ignorant or try to vilify her, while all other religions are presented with generous interpretations from the perspective of those that practice it.

Therefore, I am presenting to you a list of specific edits and a write-up offering Hindu perspective to help bring this document up to the proper standards of historical accuracy and adherence to the State of California education codes. It is important that the document makes an effort for authentic portrayal of the history of India and the Hindu faith.

The opening statement of the narrative offers good guidance which is not followed with regard to India. Please follow your own guidance that says "One of the great historical projects of the last few decades has been to shift from teaching Western Civilization, a narrative that put Western Europe at the center of world events in this period, to teaching world history. Decentering Europe is a complicated process, because themes, periods, narratives, and terminology of historical study were originally built around Europe."

To help you in this process I offer attached with this letter:
   1. Attachment - I. Write-up explaining Hindu social structure from a Hindu perspective in the context of present California society.
   2. Attachment - II. A list of specific edits for the 6th grade portion of the revised draft.
   3. Attachment - III. Copy of a letter submitted to IQC, earlier in the year to which we have over 2500 signatories.

I hope Instructional Quality Commission shall carefully review the attached documents. I have put in effort to provide you tools necessary to help with the process of decentering European goggles with regard to Hinduism and India. I hope the commission will understand the frustration felt by the Hindu community of California for being persistently singled out for an absurd portrayal from a foreign perspective, and shall take the necessary steps to incorporate the suggested changes in the framework narrative without further delay.

Sincerely,

Tushar Pandya
Californiahindus.org

Attachment – I

Understanding Hindu social structure from a Hindu perspective in the context of present California society. Author: Tushar Pandya.

In writing this document, my attempt is to paint a picture, to explain and educate the commission, and through this public process, the other parts of our education system such as textbook publishers and teachers, on the Hindu social structure from a Hindu perspective. I do this to help with the process of decentralizing Europe, as I understand that people in California education system have really had no opportunity to see things from a Hindu perspective and hence have no understanding of the subject matter.

Let us face some facts. Hindu-Indian civilization is among the oldest living civilizations on the planet Earth. Hindu-India has survived through rise and fall of Greece, rise and fall of Rome, and survived and retained her Hindu identity through centuries of relentless invasions by foreign religious crusaders. This while maintaining a continuity of civilization and a unique outlook and perspective to religion through Dharma. Europe and Middle-east went through lot of turmoil and countries like Spain and Turkey changing their very identity multiple times. It needs to be acknowledged that this is, in a large part due to India's very sophisticated, evolved, adopting and flexible social structure. Societies and civilizations with rigid structures fall and cease existence, giving way to new civilizations. This makes Hindu social structure among the longest living social structure on planet Earth. The proof is in the pudding. Hindu social structure is highly evolved, sophisticated and yet flexible enough to adopt with time without giving up its identity. It is time that we acknowledge this brilliant structure at least for its longevity and ability to provide stability, sense of belonging and identity to Indian civilization.

Why this illogical obsession to portray this oldest and still living civilization on the planet in such a ridiculous and condescending way? Why this persistent hostile attitude towards it by calling the social structure 'particularly rigid and unbending'. If the structure was rigid and unbending as alleged, it would not have survived; instead it has been the very cause for survival of Hindu-Indian civilization. This hostile attitude towards Hindu social structure is simply un-American.

Hierarchical rigid and unbending structures are the ones that do not stand the test of time. India has not fallen while many civilizations have come and gone and this is in large part due to her stable and flexible social structure that can adopt with time.

We owe it to our children to present this amazing and historic social structure to our children for what it is – without vilification.

The problem, simply put remains that Hinduism is singled out for an absurd portrayal from an exclusively outsiders perspective – from a white Euro-Christian perspective. We Hindus are objectified, sensationalized, vilified and degraded, while European and Abrahamic cultures are humanized.

My recommendation is that you either do justice in fairly portraying the Hindu social structure for what it was, or drop it entirely. An orientalist, reductionist, absurd portrayal is unacceptable. For the 6th grade level and for introduction to Hinduism the focus should not be on the Hindu caste structure as it takes at least High-School to develop the sensibilities and other knowledge based foundation to understand this. Also children deserve an introduction to Hinduism for what it is, without unfairly being associated with any social problems, as if they were problems of the religion. For instance, slavery and colonization are not presented as aspects of Abrahamic religion, even though they were based upon an Abrahamic religious claim of being chosen people or the 'only correct' religion or a right to dominion.

I do understand the difficulty the IQC faces, traditionally in the west the period before 300CE is seen through European goggles as a primitive pre-medieval period with primitive concepts of social freedom and a factual, accurate narrative for Hindu history does not fit that stereotype notion because the Vedic period in India was in fact a period of great advancements in science, technology as well as philosophy, social structures and individual freedom and rights.

The framework narrative talks about a Hindu "Caste" system. Now, "Caste", is in fact a European construct – taken from Portuguese word casta which is used to refer to color or breed of cattle!! **Caste as explained in the textbooks, as also in your revised draft framework, has no basis in any of the Hindu scriptures.**

The Hindu social structure is a highly sophisticated, evolved and a complex system of वर्ण **varṇa**, आश्रम **āśrama** and जाती **jātī** in addition to government officials. वर्ण **varṇa** is in fact a category based upon mental, intellectual and spiritual makeup of a person while आश्रम **āśrama** is stage of life and जाती **jātī** is most closely related to family traditions and tends to be hereditary, because that is after-all how family traditions are passed down. Jati is sometimes perceived to be tied to occupations in life to some extent, because occupation or a group of occupations tended to be a family tradition in that era.

This sophisticated system is simply not appropriate for 6th grade and deserves to be understood at high-school level. The British tried over a century to document and map the Jati system to Varna and failed. Too sophisticated for entire British Empire is also too sophisticated for 6th graders to get their heads around.

The **necessary pre-requisites to understand the Hindu social structure** are the following which 6th graders simply do not have:

1. An understanding of the goals or objectives of Hindu life. These are called चतुर्विध पुरुषार्थ **caturvidha puruṣārth.** They are: धर्म **dharma,** अर्थ **artha,** काम **kāma,** and मोक्ष **mokṣa.** Each a complex topic in itself. The social structure in a planned out civilization would be a solution to some objective. Goals which any civilization tries to enable for all its citizens, becomes a defining trait of the civilization. Social

structure needs to be studied in this context. Vedic civilization presents an inherent inconvenience to the Eurocentric narrative that wants to paint a picture of this era being primitive nomadic tribes of hunter gatherers who started banding together not in any particularly planned way. Seen in the right light, we might find there are brilliant sophisticated solutions in Vedic society that could even apply to our present day problems.

2. A good functional understanding of the principle of Rebirth. The Hindu principle of rebirth, by-the-way, has pretty much zero similarity to the absurd foreign portrayal of rebirth made in most textbooks.

3. Understanding that there is a diversity of human वासना **vāsanā** or the inherent diverse spectrum of human desires.

4. Principle of कर्म karma or taking responsibility for personal action.

5. अध्यात्म विद्या **adhyātma vidyā** or understanding the constant laws of nature through which everyone in the world is interconnected. A practical understanding of these laws is the foundation of Hinduism. Foundation of Hinduism is not a dogma or a doctrine that demands blind obedience.

I hope you shall redo the section on caste to be in line with California state standards on social content. The present portrayal is an orientalist, reductionist view portraying the Hindu social structure as a primitive or an oppressive system and is hence absolutely unacceptable as it is in violation of the Laws and the very spirit of the USA and a violation of the California standards for social content as well.

Jati (जाती **jātī**) is not unlike what existed all over the world including in medieval Europe and even in the present day America to some extent. A Cartwright is family of wagon wheel makers, and Baker is from a Baking family, US has military families today and political dynasties is becoming a contemporary reality. Also silicon-valley where I live is home to increasing Jati of entrepreneurs, or tech professionals who hang out with more of their kind to fuel creativity and benefit from supportive eco-system. Their children have early exposure to technology are hence comfortable with it. To use wordings from your narrative on Jati, industry networking groups such as IEEE or TiE, would be described as an oppressive caste system designed to prohibit people who are not members of their exclusive club, group or profession from mingling with each other. This kind of portrayal is ridiculous and absurd.

In our present day societies, we have zoning laws. Additionally different residential neighborhoods take on very different personalities, to a point where some very normal behavior in one neighborhood can get neighbors up in arms in another neighborhood and city ordinances in different cities can be very different, often to respect the 'character' of various different neighborhoods. Should this be described as "In United States the government is particularly unbending and rigid and has laws designed to prohibit diversity of human activities to co-exist in same neighborhood. Specifically American society is structured to prohibit different types of business activity from happening near each other. Also people are forced to live in separate neighborhoods based upon various aspects of their social identity. Hence American society is often described as a caste structure, designed to

separate different castes, where only activities pre-approved for the caste can co-habitat in any given area."? The portrayal of Hindu social structure in your draft framework is well beyond limits of absurd, just like this characterization of our zoning laws and city ordinances would be. Please bring some common-sense to how India is viewed. The hypocrisy in portrayal of India is becoming increasingly intolerable, and is undoubtedly un-American in its spirit of meanness.

Family traditions, lifestyles and to a lesser extent occupations are the defining criteria of Jati and obviously they tended to be hereditary with children often taking up their parents profession. Formation of Jati was founded upon the acknowledgment of a notion that family traditions and upbringing have a significant and formative impact on the psyche of a child. That learning and building of lifetime habits begins from the cradle. In our present day society also we have enough data to validate this notion. In the K-12 education system in California notably, data is emerging showing a strong correlation between subject matter proficiency of the child and college education of parents. Family traditions are a reality and cannot be cited as oppressive or rigid and unbending. In our community, we continuously have people who cross a significant milestone of being the first in their family to attend college. This while the school constantly asserts that going to college is not a necessary criterion for successful education. Similarly there are families where the new tradition is of being first to not join armed forces. Societies are formed on traditions and with time they evolve and change. Singling out and presenting Hindu family traditions in a light that reflects adversely on Hinduism is a malicious attempt at eroding Hindu culture and is in violation of California state standards on social content.

The only difference between Jati in Indian structure and other parts of the world is that in Indian society Jatis formed into self-governing groups, with each group having representation and a voice in government. This aspect is manifesting in our country through special interest groups having highly paid lobbyists representing their interest in government. In Hindu society of Vedic period, they eliminated the need to hire and fund lobbyists. Each Jati got a voice through representation. Hence this system provided social stability and gave an identity to each community. There was a **sense of pride in each Jati**, as there was some skill or ability they would excel at, or a special service they provided to society. The analogy in our country would be like community pride built through sports teams and mascots of a school. Each fan or a student feels a sense of pride with association, regardless of the ranking of the team or the school. Even today many Hindus are proud to associate with their Jati, whatever it might be, to the extent the family traditions are relevant to their present lifestyles. Having a voice through representation is neither a sign of oppression nor that of a rigid unbending structure. Jati, importantly is not a hierarchical social structure. However some social value could be given to it. New Jatis would evolve as the needs changed and societies regrouped. Can you say that in our society, in social circles we make no differentiation between a garbage collector and a brain surgeon? Does a garbage collector not add a very necessary value to society? One could correctly argue that society would function without brain surgeons but not without garbage collectors. Yet, social circles are what they are, and a brain surgeon is highly paid while a garbage collector is not in the present day United States. Blowing such aspects of other cultures and civilization out of context and out of proportion to a point it becomes the identifying character of a religion is plain wrong.

वर्ण **varṇa** is a classification based upon mental, intellectual and spiritual tendencies of a person and is <u>not</u> determined by birth. Varna is a wonderful Hindu concept designed to encourage people of different inclinations to work to their strengths and nature while keeping the four pillar powers of society namely Knowledge, Government, Wealth, and Manpower distributed to different groups, thus maintaining a social balance of power. Something our present day society could learn from where the problem is increasingly becoming whoever has money gets the best education and hence gets into powerful positions and controls the working class.

ब्राह्मण **brāhmaṇa** are those with strong intellectual qualities who are willing to sacrifice physical comfort but are uncompromising on intellectual ideals, dignity and moral values. They were the Rishis (Indian scientists), teachers, consultants and even priests. Brahmans tended to be highly respected in the society even though they were in overwhelming numbers - poor, lived lives lacking material comforts and often begged for daily food. **This was unique about Hindu society that Brahmans, even though poor and literally begged for their food often had a greater social respect compared even to the King, the monarch of the land or the Wealthy merchants**. Hindu society of the Vedic period was not a purely materialistic society. As a contrast to Europe and Middle-east, India was a civilization where Science did not have any conflict with Religion and both developed hand in hand, to such an extent that scientific debates and demand for justifications were an integral part of religious discourse. Differing views on religious interpretation were allowed and developed in harmony. Even today Hinduism does not have a hierarchical central clergy structure. Despite this Hinduism has a unified continuity and a central message, and this is because of the social structure and the respect given to the intellectuals. Vilifying the Brahmana is the colonial and proselytizing tactic, to erode the very backbone of Hindu culture.

क्षत्रीय **kṣatrīya** are those that have qualities of bravery in war, valor, standing up for social injustice, leadership skills, dedicating self for greater good, law and order. Kshatriyas would hold government positions, in the army or in law and order.

वैश्य **vaiśya** are those with an entrepreneurial instinct in trade, farming, animal husbandry, business and industry. Those with 'fire in the belly' for economic accomplishments, or producing economic goods. Vaishyas tended to be the most wealthy and prosperous of all the Varna. This is also unique about Hindu social structure in that the Kshatriyas i.e. the governing class with power was not the most wealthy, despite having the most governing power.

शुद्र **śudra** are those who dedicate themselves to developing individual artistic or physical skill with an inclination towards physical work, such as artisans, craftsmen or general workforce. They tend to have the most personal freedoms and the smallest code of "must do's".

Varna was not based on birth, and famous examples of the Brahmana Sages of Vyasa,

Vishwamitra and Valmiki are cited who were all highly venerated Brahmana Sages but not born into Brahmana families. What is unique is that Vishwamitra who was a very rich and powerful Kshatriya king, gave up his kingdom and his wealth because he saw a greater calling to evolve and grow as a Brahmana and eventually became a venerated Brahma Rishi with no material possessions.

We talk about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the Hindu social structure was designed around it and perfected the science of the inner world while having significant accomplishments in the outer material world as well. Each was not just allowed, but entire society was structured to enable people to pursue their individual needs and wants while maintaining Dharma and a social order. While all people are created equal in the potential we can reach. We are all born differently in terms of our learning styles and things that appeal to us. We now know that forcing a left hand writer to learn to write with right hand is unnecessary and could stunt the inherent potential. Teachers are now recognizing that different students have different abilities to learn, some are visual learners, some are analytical etc. Hindu society simply took this acknowledgement and refined it further. It is malicious misrepresentation that Hinduism requires a person to be born in a brahman family to attain moksha. There are plenty of examples through Hindu history of plenty of saints and enlightened masters who were born in all the different Varnas and from various Jatis, thus proving that the social structure worked. People from all classes grew and evolved while following their respective traditions. Each Varna also pursued a different life-style based upon the आश्रम āśrama or the stage of life they were in.

The four आश्रम āśrama or stages of Indian society are: A) ब्रह्मचर्य brahmacarya – or life as a student, developing qualities of discipline and austerity, while gaining education and skills. Indian education system was very evolved in this era and some of the world's earliest universities such as Taxashila and Nalanda were in India. Children from all classes had access to good education and the famous story of Krshna and Sudama illustrates how a prince and the poorest of poor studied in the same school and were best friends. B) गृहस्थ gr̥hastha – life as a householder. This is the stage of life where the individual lives his life and makes a career in his chosen field. C) वानप्रस्थ vānaprastha – Life of growing disengagement. This is the stage when people with worldly accomplishments make room to induct and 'on-board' the new generation into their respective careers. This system solves the need to have term-limits or to have special programs to induct the new generation into established roles. Famous example is from the Ramayana where King Dasharath upon noticing a single white hair in his reflection in the mirror, voluntarily resolved to hand over his kingdom by scheduling coronation of his teenage heir Shri Ramchandra of Ayodhya. D) सन्यास sanyāsa – This is the stage when an individual dedicates his life to union with God through God realization and enlightenment. A Sanyasi lives to the vow of dedicating his life for benefit of others because he realizes that everyone in the world is manifestation of the same God. Hence the only family a Sanyasi has is the world as one family.

Sanyasa and Brahmacharya are notably the two *ashramas* where the class distinction is

largely dissolved or significantly minimized, reaffirming the Hindu foundational concepts of Adhyatma Vidya, of an inherent unity of all and a cyclic time line of creation and dissolution at the beginning and end of each persons lifetime.

The revised narrative on India, especially the section on 6th grade makes the reader believe that there was nothing of social or any other value to learn from the oldest living civilization on the planet. It presents a wrong notion that their social structure was inherently unfair and oppressive. This is not healthy attitude to teach our children especially in this global age, where Asia and India are re-emerging as significant centers in the world. We are talking about a civilization that has had an economic might almost 10 times that of the Roman Empire's peak! A civilization whose culture influenced a significant part of the world without military force. Please apply the California state standards for social content to Hindus and people of Indian origin as well. Hinduism cannot be singled out for portrayal from an outsider's perspective. From an absurd perspective.

6th grade is about introduction to Hinduism and there is enough to know about Hinduism without having to bring up the Hindu social structure in an absurd way. Hinduism offers unique learning opportunities to learn about embracing diversity in society, something we in California need. Please remove the Hindu social structure from 6th grade entirely, or do it in a way that does justice to it. Because of the sophisticated nature of the Hindu social structure, it deserves to be handled at High-school level where the various enabling aspects of this system can be understood for what they were. Please bring an immediate end to this injustice of singling out Hinduism for vilification through exclusively foreign interpretations.

Attachment – II

Edits to the Draft Narrative.

Proposed edits for the Instructional Practice for Grades Six through Eight.
(Attachment 1C from the meeting of Oct 8, 2015.)

Grade Six – World History and Geography: Ancient Civilizations
Global Overview: Early Beginnings to 300 CE

1. Lines 7-9.

    Wording from Draft: "How did the major religious and philosophical systems (Judaism, Greek thought, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism) support individuals, rulers, and societies?"

    Proposed wording: "How did the major religious and philosophical systems (Judaism, Greek thought, Hinduism, '**Vedic Philosophy, Dharmic thought'**, Buddhism, Confucianism) support individuals, rulers, and societies?"

    Justification: Add the words **Vedic Philosophy, Dharmic thought**. It is a misguided Eurocentric view that 'thought' or 'philosophy' of any value originated in Abrahamic traditions or in Europe. It is necessary for teachers and text-book makers to understand that the Vedic thought and Dharmic Philosophies have had a very strong formative influence on societies which were touched by them, and that the influence has been in different ways from the way Abrahamic religions influenced societies. Significantly Dharmic thought embraces diversity and hence promotes social diversity and accepts difference. Thus while the religions based upon the Dharmic thought had to defend themselves against invasions by Islamic invaders. There was never violence like the crusades between Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism; and also Sikkhism even though it originated much later.

2. Lines 12-15

    Wording from Draft: "Students in sixth-grade world history and geography classrooms learn about the lives of the earliest humans, the development of tools, the foraging way of life, agriculture, and the emergence of civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus River valley, China, Mesoamerica, and the Mediterranean basin."

    Proposed wording: "Students in sixth-grade world history and geography classrooms learn about the lives of the earliest humans, the development of tools, the foraging way of life, agriculture, and the emergence of civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus River valley, **Indian sub-continent,** China, Mesoamerica, and the Mediterranean basin."

    Justification: Add the words '**Indian sub-continent'.** Without those words, it leaves the impression that till 300CE, the only civilization that existed in India was in Indus River valley. It is

necessary to impress upon students that while the earliest civilizations in the world started in Indus River valley, by 300CE Indian sub-continent had extensive spread of civilizations and empires from India had a wide spread cultural and global influence which extended much beyond the Indian sub-continent.

3. Lines 36-38

Wording from Draft: "The birth and spread of religious and philosophical systems (Judaism, Greek thought, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism) which responded to human needs and supported social norms and power structures."

Proposed wording: "The birth and spread of religious and philosophical systems (Judaism, Greek thought, Hinduism, **Vedic philosophy, Dharmic thought,** Buddhism, Confucianism) which responded to human needs and supported social norms and power structures."

Justification: Add the words '**Vedic Philosophy, Dharmic thought'**. The Vedic philosophy needs to be acknowledged as a philosophical system as does the Dharmic thought which was common to the religions of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and later Sikkhism. Not making this mention is continuing the colonialist orientalist view that non-Abrahamic cultures and people out of Europe had nothing of value in terms of sophisticated Philosophy and Thought.

4. Line 76

Proposed addition of a line: "**It is notable that archeological information has shown that the earliest known civilization was in India – the Indus River Valley civilization**"

Justification: It is important to present relevant facts to children to promote critical thinking.

5. Lines 228-230

Wording from Draft: "In this period, the religions of Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity and the philosophies of Confucianism and Greek thought emerged and spread within empires and along trade routes."

Proposal: Reword the sentence to indicate that Hinduism is ancient and while the start date of Hinduism is not known, all historical theories accept that Hinduism was significantly older than the other major religions and specifically much before the time Christianity, Buddhism or Islam emerged.

Justification: The wording in the draft misleads into thinking that Hinduism, Judiasm, Buddhism, Christianity etc emerged around the same time. It is Orientalist Eurocentric view that religion

emerged in the world only around the time that Christianity emerged. It is important to word the narrative accurately to show there was a sequence.

6. Lines 772-780.

    Wording from Draft: "How did the environment influence the emergence and decline of the

    Harappa civilization?"

    Comments / Issue with the wording: Lines 62-75 of the draft talks about geography, environmental factors and its impact on the culture. This period of early history is explained as till 300CE on line 1. There was a lot of spread of highly evolved civilization in India by that time. Granted Harappa is particularly significant as it is the oldest of civilizations ever found through archaeological evidence. However limiting understanding geography and environmental factors to Harappa civilization is not fair. It misleads the students into thinking that there was only Harappa or Saraswati basin Civilization in India till 300CE. The geography of India is particularly significant in understanding the widest diversity of traditions to be ever found in any civilization yet. Indian sub-continent is home to a very diverse wide spectrum of geographic terrain and climatic regions. From dry deserts to the place with highest rainfall in the world, from rocky mountains to plains, valleys, plateaus and islands, tropical rainforests and cold tundra. For all practical purposes, there is no climate type or geography that does not exist in the Indian sub-continent. The range of flora and fauna found on the Indian sub-continent is also very diverse and vast. This inherent diversity of climate and geography relates to the diversity found in Hinduism, Hindu traditions and Indian culture. The culture of India hence accepts diversity as part of nature, and in this is very different than cultures formed in dry desert lands of mostly uniform geography and climate, which tend to be homogenous and not as diverse. This is another reason we Hindus find the portrayal of Hinduism in the framework as 'foreign', because we see a tendency to reduce and label or 'box' the civilization in a narrative that wants to see religion and culture both from an Abrahamic, uniform doctrine view which is foreign to us. A significant learning from the story of Mahabharata comes from the part where the Pandava King Yuddhisthira of Indraprastha sets out to perform the Ashwamedha Sacrifice and through it establish an empire, and a significant part of the empire building was done through peaceful methods, tackling head-on the issues of diversity of thought, culture and view-points of various lands and kingdoms, through diplomacy founded upon mutual respect. None of this is even hinted upon in your revised draft.

    Proposed edit: Add more bullet points to make study of India more meaningful. Possibly something like: "**Indian-subcontinent is home to a rich diversity of climates, geographical terrian, flora-fauna in addition to a culture that is home to a diverse mix of races. How did the diversity of the environment on the Indian sub-continent result in the Vedic civilization to be very diverse in its traditions and culture**." Add another bullet point "**How were the religion of Hinduism, the Vedic Philosophy and the Dharmic thought instrumental in creating a common identity across kingdoms with varied traditions, climate and geography.**"

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Justification: Accepting diversity as the varied colors in a garden is an important lesson children can take from learning about India. Also India provides lot of opportunity to learn how environmental factors impact traditions and culture including food, clothing and other habits.

7. Line 775 – 776
    Proposed Edit: Add the following bullet points:
    - "**What were the scientific, mathematical, technological, architectural and medical advancements that happened in India during this period?**
    - **How did yoga influence the Indian civilization?**
    - **How did Hinduism influence architecture?**"

    Justification: Sincerity in the stated objective of decentering Europe needs to reflect through portrayal of India through things significant in India in this period. This was a period when India made very significant developments in areas of Jyotish (Astronomy), mathematics, Ayurveda, metallurgy, surgery, architecture (Vastu Shastra) etc. Yoga is a gift of India to the world that came about in this era. Making no mention of these accomplishments is making mockery of the very spirit of studying history.

8. Line 775

    Wording from Draft: *"How did the religion of Hinduism support individuals, rulers, and societies?"*

    Proposed wording: "How did the religion of **Hinduism, the Vedic Philosophy and the Dharmic thought** support individuals, rulers, and societies?"

    Justification: Add the words '**, the Vedic Philosophy and the Dharmic thought'**. The Vedic philosophy and the Dharmic thought needs to be acknowledged as the philosophy which was a basis for social laws, customs and practices.

9. Line 788-790

    Wording from Draft: *"The river valley was ~~larger than~~ either Mesopotamia or Egypt, and its soil was very rich."*

    Proposed wording: **"**The river valley was **twice the size of** either Mesopotamia or Egypt, and its soil was very rich."

    Justification: Students should understand the relative size of these civilizations, partly to counter the Eurocentric approach to history as advised in the above introduction.

10. Line 797-798

Wording from Draft: "Arising in the third millennium BCE, the Harappan civilization attained its zenith between about 2600 and 1900 BCE."

Proposed wording: **"Arising in the third millennium BCE, the Harappan civilization attained its zenith between about 2600 and 1900, *with an estimated population of five million, at-least 20 percent of the world's population.'"**

Justification: Otherwise students have no sense of perspective on the size of India's early civilization."

11. Line 802-804

Wording from Draft: "Some of the statues and figurines show features that are all present in modern Hinduism, such as a male figure that resembles the Hindu God Shiva in meditating posture."

Proposed wording: **"Some of the statues and figurines, as well as images on the seals,** show features that are all present in modern Hinduism, such as a male figure that resembles the Hindu God Shiva in **a** meditating posture, **as well as small clay figures in the posture of the traditional Hindu greeting 'namaste'."**

Justification: It is important for the students to understand how much of this imagery and sculpture are related to Hindu practices. We believe the above figurine in "Namaste" posture is especially informative.

12. Line 810

Wording from Draft: "Indian history then entered the Vedic period (ca. ~~1500-500 BCE~~), an era named for the *Vedas*, Sanskrit religious texts passed on for generations through a complex oral tradition."

Proposed wording: **"Indian history then entered the Vedic period (ca. 2500-500 BCE), an era named for the *Vedas*, Sanskrit religious texts passed on for generations through a complex oral tradition."**

Justification: Need to update to more recent historical research. The 1500 BCE date for the Vedas was proposed in the 19th century, prior to the discovery of the Harappan culture and prior to the discovery by satellite photos of the dried Sarasvati river bed. Previously the river was thought to be mythical. Since the Rig Veda repeatedly describes the Sarasvati as a mighty river flowing from the Himalayas to the ocean, much of that scripture had to be composed before the river dried up in 2000 BCE

13. Line 812-821

Wording from Draft: "~~In that period, people speaking Indic languages, which are part of the larger Indo-European family of languages, entered South Asia, probably by way of Iran.~~

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Gradually, Indic languages, including Sanskrit, spread across northern India. They included the ancestors of such modern languages as Hindi, Urdu, and Bengali. The early Indic speakers were most likely animal herders. They may have arrived in India in scattered bands, later intermarrying with populations perhaps ancestral to those who speak Dravidian languages, such as Tamil and Telagu in southern India and Sri Lanka today. In the same era, nomads who spoke Indo-Iranian languages moved into Persia. Indic, Iranian, and most European languages are related."

Proposed wording: "***The people who composed the Rig Veda lived in*** सप्त सिन्धु sapta sindhu ***or the "Land of the Seven Rivers," which corresponds to the Harappan/Indus--Sarasvati region. The Rig Veda describes the Sarasvati as "the most mighty of rivers" flowing from the Himalayas to the ocean. Therefore the Rig had to be composed before 2000 BCE, by which time the river had dried up. The Sanskrit language is part of the Indo-European family of languages, which includes most languages of northern India, such as Hindi, and nearly all of the European languages including Latin and Greek. To explain how a sophisticated language like Sanskrit came to be in India, some colonialist Europeans who subscribe to Orientalist view of the world proposed a conjecture that Sanskrit-speaking people came in a series of invasions from central Asia, destroying the existing Indian civilization. Obviously there is no evidence of such conquest, and plenty of evidence that the earliest civilization on planet earth has been in Indus River Valley, much before any in Europe. Even today some euro-centric historians hold that the Vedic people came in peaceful migrations from central Asia; a growing number of rational historians accept the obvious that they were indigenous to India. Historically, there was a significant dispersion of Harappan--Saraswati society from 1900 BCE onward, with a large section of the population settling in the Ganga plains and other areas within and even beyond India.***"

14. Line 822-823

Wording from Draft: "Later in the Vedic period, new commercial towns arose along the ~~Ganges~~, India's second great river system."

Proposed wording: "Later in the Vedic period, new **royal and** commercial towns arose along the **Ganga**, India's second great river system."

Justification: Major towns were established by kings, such as Indraprastha on the river Yamuna, the Pandava royal capital created by clearing a forest. Its establishment was not the result of commercial activity. Also, the correct spelling is Ganga or गङ्गा gaṅgā, not the Anglicized *Ganges*.

15. Line 823-825

Wording from Draft: "~~In this era, Vedic culture (or Brahmanism in the existing standards) emerged as a belief system that combined the beliefs of Indic speakers with those of older populations.~~"

Proposed wording: **"*By 600 BCE the social, religious, and philosophical ideas and practices central to early Hinduism are fully evident and in continuity with the Harappan culture and the teachings and ceremonial worship described in the Vedas.*"**

Justification: The explanation in the draft narrative assumes the Aryan invasion/migration as a fact when it is a conjecture made by orientalists, absent any historical evidence. It cannot, therefore, be the basis for a baseless euro centric claim regarding the emergence of a belief system resulting from a supposed combination of new arrivals with older populations. Also Hinduism is not founded upon blind belief to a doctrine like the Abrahamic religions.

16. Line 827-829

Wording from Draft: "~~Brahmins, that is, priestly families, assumed authority over complex devotional rituals, but many important sages, such as Valmiki and Vyasa, were not brahmins.~~"

Proposed wording: **"Nineteenth-century euro-centric orientalists spoke of a priest-dominated religion at this time called Brahmanism, but this concept has been discarded, as it is found to be hostile towards Hindus and simply un-American."**

Justification: The proposed revision is simply a restatement of the discarded concept of Brahmanism (in the 2005--6 edits process) without using the word Brahmanism.

17. Line 829-846

Wording from Draft: "~~The brahmin class expounded the idea of the oneness of all living things and of Brahman as the divine principle of being. The Hindu tradition is thus monistic, the idea of reality being a unitary whole. Brahman may be manifested in many ways, including incarnation in the form of deities, including Vishnu, preserver of the world, and Shiva, creator and destroyer of the world. These gods could be seen as aspects of Brahman, an all-pervading divine, supreme reality. Vedic teachings gradually built up a rich body of spiritual and moral teachings that formed the foundation of Hinduism as it is practiced today. These teachings were transmitted orally at first, and then later in written texts, the Upanishads and, later, the Bhagavad Gita. Performance of duties and ceremonies became one dimension of the supreme quest to achieve oneness with divine reality. That fulfillment, however, demands obedience to the moral law of the universe, called dharma, which also refers to performance of social duties. Success or failure at existing in harmony with dharma determines how many times an individual might be subject to reincarnation, or repeated death and rebirth at either lower or higher positions of moral and ritual purity. Progress toward spiritual realization is governed by karma, the principle that right deeds done in one lifetime condition an individual's place in the next one.~~"

Proposed wording: **"*In addition to the early Vedic and Upanishadic texts, Hindu scriptures taking their present form at this time include later Upanishads, the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Puranas and Agamas. Brahman, the Supreme God, is defined in scripture as immanent (present throughout the world) and transcendent (beyond it as well). In action, Brahman creates, preserves and dissolves the universe over vast periods of time. Brahman also becomes the various Deities with multiple names and forms who are worshiped as distinct personal Gods or Goddesses, such as Vishnu, Shiva, Sarasvati, Durga, etc. Key Hindu beliefs evident at this time include the identity of the soul*"**

(atman) with Brahman, dharma (including ethics, law and justice), karma, reincarnation, and liberation from rebirth. The supreme quest is to achieve oneness with God."

Justification: The revised draft narrative is inauthentic, not reflective of common Hindu belief and appears intended to reinforce the primacy of caste in the presentation of Hindu thinking. It also avoids allowing Hindus any belief in the Supreme Being, reinforcing the assumption throughout the narrative that only Abrahamic religions have a true Supreme Being worthy of being capitalized. The principle of karma is much larger than the one defined: that it determines the next birth. **Also we find it objectionable to characterize Shiva as the destroyer of the world. Shiva is the God of auspicious transformations. Hindus have a cyclic concept of time which is inherently different from the western linear concept of time. Each auspicious transformation begins with one form giving way to another, just like the seed is "destroyed" for the tree to emerge from it, or an egg must be destroyed for the dinosaur to emerge from it. The cake cannot be eaten without being 'destroyed'. In common language destruction has negative connotation. Characterizing this as destroyer or destroyer of the world is absurd and simply inaccurate. Please use the term auspicious transformer if you need a simple descriptor label for Shiva.**

18. Line 850-861

Wording from Draft: "~~As in all early civilizations, Indian society witnessed the development of a system of social classes. Ancient Indian society formed into self-governing groups, jatis, that emphasized birth as the defining criteria. Jatis initially shared the same occupation and married only within the group. This system, often termed caste, provided social stability and gave an identity to each community. The *Vedas* also describe four main social categories, known as varnas, namely: Brahmins (priests); Kshatriyas (kings and warriors); Vaishyas (merchants, artisans, and farmers) and Sudras (peasants and laborers). A person belonged to a particular varna by his professional excellence and his good conduct, not by birth itself. In addition, by 500 CE or earlier, there existed certain communities outside this system, the "Untouchables," who did the most unclean work, such as cremation, disposal of dead animals, and sanitation.~~"

Proposal: Indian social structure is very complex and sophisticated and 6th grade is really not the right grade to get into the details of this. Yet if you have to describe this system it should be done with the sensitivity, courtesy, accuracy and detail it deserves. Singling out Hinduism for a foreign interpretation is unfair and unacceptable. We insist this section in particular is done to be compliant to the CA state standards on social content in letter and spirit. High school is a much better time when this sophisticated system can be understood for what it really is. Also the Indian social structure cannot be understood without adequately understanding: a) The principle of rebirth, b) diversity of human Vasanas or the inherent diverse spectrum of human desires c) Principle of Karma or taking personal responsibility for ones actions and finally d) Adhyatma or understanding of constant Laws of nature through which everyone in the world is interconnected. There are learnings from this system that can be valuable to our present day problems. For instance, the Varna system was a great way to ensure that the four pillar powers of a society, namely - Knowledge, Government authority, Wealth and Manpower are distributed among the society and not controlled by few special interest groups. Our society is increasingly becoming one where whoever has wealth gets the best education and hence gets access to the best jobs

and government positions eventually controlling the working class. In the interest of length it is best to remove the section on 'caste' from 6th grade.

Proposed wording if you must introduce this in 6th grade: **"Indian society witnessed the development of a highly evolved and sophisticated social structure that was based upon enabling every individual to live to the four goals or accomplishments of Hindu life, namely, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Ancient Indian society formed into self-governing groups, based upon a complex system of Varna, Ashrama and Jati. Jatis emphasized family traditions as the defining criteria and tended to be hereditary. People from a Jati initially tended to have similar occupation and lived in close-knit communities with a sense of pride in their Jati identity. Varna emphasized mental, intellectual and spiritual tendencies of a person and had four major groups – Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Each varna was encouraged to live to their strengths and was not forced to conform to other's standards, likes or dislikes. Ashrama was the stage of life and life was seen in four distinct stages of Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanprastha and Sanyasa. This system, maliciously termed 'caste', by the colonialist Europeans, in-fact provided social stability, gave an identity to each community and unified the Indian sub-continent with a common culture. In addition, by 500 CE or earlier, there existed a small number of people in certain communities of free people outside this system. Hindu society did not have slavery."**

Justification: The draft narrative is inauthentic, not reflective of the enabling aspects of the Hindu social structure and appears intended to reinforce the primacy of caste in the presentation of Hindu thinking. The draft narrative as written is directly responsible for Hindus and Indian children in California schools being bullied and abused and having problems with self-esteem. It is unacceptable to single out Indian civilization and Hinduism for an exclusively absurd and foreign interpretation of its practices. The narrative as written is wrong, unfair, in violation of California standards on social content, and reflects adversely on Hinduism. The proposed narrative is an accurate and more meaningful presentation of the Hindu social structure. **Also characterization that "a person belonged to a particular varna by his professional excellence and his good conduct, not by birth itself" is absurd. Please refer to Attachment – I for an understanding of the Hindu social structure and the varnas. Varna is a classification based upon mental, intellectual and spiritual makeup of a person. This can be transformed in a lifetime and not through any kind of ritual or professional excellence. Stories of Vishwamitra and Valmiki are stories of this transformation and none of them became Brahmana due to professional excellence or good conduct.**

19. Line 862-883

Wording from Draft: ~~"Relations between classes came to be expressed in terms of ritual purity or impurity, higher classes being purer than lower ones. This class system became distinctive over the centuries for being especially complex and formal, involving numerous customs and prohibitions on eating together and intermarrying that kept social and occupational groups distinct from one another in daily life. Over the centuries, the Indian social structure became more rigid, though perhaps not more inflexible than the class divisions in other ancient civilizations. When Europeans began to visit India in modern times, they used the word "caste" to characterize the~~

social system because of the sharp separation they perceived between groups who did not ~~intermarry and thus did not mix with each other. Caste, however, is a term that social scientists~~ ~~use to describe any particularly unbending social structure, for example, slave-holding society in~~ ~~the American south before the Civil War, which can make the "caste" label offensive. Today many~~ ~~Hindus, in India and in the United States, do not identify themselves as belonging to a caste.~~ Teachers should make clear to students that this was a social and cultural structure rather than a religious belief~~. As in Mesopotamia and Egypt, priests, rulers, and other elites used religion to~~ ~~justify the social hierarchy. The teacher has students draw a social hierarchy pyramid of the~~ ~~varnas and compare that pyramid with the Mesopotamian social hierarchy pyramid they made~~ ~~earlier. In both cases, rulers, political elites (warriors and officials) and priests were on the top of~~ ~~the social hierarchy. This was a common pattern of premodern societies."~~

Proposal: Remove the entire section except the line "**Teachers should make clear to students that this was a social and cultural structure rather than a religious belief**."

Justification: Justification: There is no comparable analysis of any other society made in the K--12 narrative, and no reason to increase the coverage of caste from 81 words in the 2014 draft to 401 words in the face of the student testimony of the humiliation and bullying they were subject to precisely because of this focus on caste in India. Social class is a subject of discussion for no other religion in the entire narrative. For example, on page 250, the feudal system is described in part, "Knights, as lords of the manors, also controlled the serfs, peasants who were tied permanently to the manor and obligated to give their lord labor and crops in return for security." There is no explanation of why this system of virtual slavery was allowed to operate within Christian society. We found no discussion of social class in the narrative's coverage of Judaism or Islam, nor in the coverage of China, Korea or Japan. On page 247 of seventh grade, slavery is mentioned as a possible cause for the fall of Rome, but no mention is made of this slavery having continued to exist under Christian rule of Rome. In grade eight, this question is asked, "Students can also wrestle with a question faced by some Founding Fathers: How could the nation's ideals of freedom, liberty, and democracy be adopted alongside slavery?" with no reference at all to Christian justification of slavery which was, in fact, crucial to slavery's preservation. Also in grade eight, the discussion of the fate of the Native American Indians on page 362 fails to mention the part of Christian missionaries. In the entire otherwise frank discussion of slavery on pages 300 to 301 there is no mention of the historical Christian and Muslim justification of the practice from a religious point of view. This was highlighted, in fact, during the recent visit of Pope Francis, who was asked to rescind the papal Bull, Romanus Pontifex of Nicholas V issued January 8, 1455, which apparently is still in effect. The Bull, available on line, in brief authorizes the Portuguese king, Alfonso, to "invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens [Muslims] and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery." Sarah Augustine, a professor of sociology at Heritage University on the Yakama Indian Reservation in the state of Washington, states in a recent article in the *Christian Century* with regard to this effort to rescind the Bull that it, along with other papal decrees, created the "Doctrine of Discovery" under which the native peoples of America were enslaved and their lands seized and which is still cited in American law. She states in the article, "In our secular society it is hard to grasp that in lands colonized by Europe, (North, Central and South America, Africa, parts of Asia, Australia and New Zealand), the land--tenure system is based upon a religious doctrine." As the Hindu students themselves passionately stated, it is grossly unfair for Hinduism to be singled out for criticism of the social system of India while every other faith is given a pass on the same issue. This is

adverse reflection on the Hindu faith. Caste is not central to India's contemporary social--economic organization and many persons are in favor of dropping caste in the Indian census report. Caste first became an issue in India because of the Indian census started during British colonial times.

The below items 19 a – 19h are alternate suggestions in the event suggestion for item 19 is not accepted in entirety.

19 a. Line 862-863

Wording from Draft: "~~Relations between classes came to be expressed in terms of ritual purity or impurity, higher classes being purer than lower ones~~."

Proposed edit: "**Relations between classes came to be expressed as relation between different parts of the same one body, each supporting and nourishing the other, as according to Vedic philosophy the Hindus saw an inherent unity among all individuals regardless of race or traditions. Teacher to show a picture of the Hindu deity विष्णु viṣṇu shown reclining on अनन्त् शेष anant śeṣa in the क्षीरसागर kṣīrasāgara or the milky ocean, the most commonly pictured position for Him, and then ask the class "Which part of His horizontal body is higher and which is lower?" Answer would be that all parts are horizontal to each other and not higher or lower. Feet have special significance in Hindu tradition and serving a teacher, guru or an elder is symbolized through serving of his feet. After all it is the feet that take one where one needs to go. No one is ever shown serving the head of God. All symbolism is in serving the feet of God, thus charity and social service are big parts of Hindu philosophy. According to the Indian thought no part of the same body is better or worse than the other and for a healthy body to function, all the parts needed to work in absolute harmony with each other.**"

Justification: The proposed wording is more accurate and meaningful. Also the proposed wording makes it easier for teachers and students to understand the social structure and the philosophy behind it.

19 b. Line 863-866

Wording from Draft: "~~This class system became distinctive over the centuries for being especially complex and formal, involving numerous customs and prohibitions on eating together and intermarrying that kept social and occupational groups distinct from one another in daily life.~~"

Proposed edit: "**Europeans realized that the only way to conquer India was through destruction of Indian Social structure. Macaulay in his famous address to the British parliament in 1835 said "I have travelled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such calibre, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native self-culture**

and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation." The denigration and vilification of the Hindu social structure has continued in the West ever since, with a deliberate intent to erase Indian culture and identity, despite this the Indian culture and identity is still not extinct. "

Justification: Unnecessary and inaccurate negative portrayal of Indian civilization. It is becoming increasingly intolerable to keep putting up with the colonization stance.

19 c. Line 866-868

Wording from Draft: "~~Over the centuries, the Indian social structure became more rigid, though perhaps not more inflexible than the class divisions in other ancient civilizations.~~"

Proposed edit: Remove the sentence entirely. Or replace with "**The Indian social structure is the longest lasting social structure that planet earth has ever seen. Early Europeans were jealous that India had such rich and long lasting tradition that survived over many centuries and during times that were especially turbulent in Europe and also in India due to foreign invasions. Most social structures in their part of the world had given way to new structure and civilizations multiple times. They hence started portraying Indian social structure as rigid (instead of inherently stable and long lasting which is a better accurate description) to justify their colonial stance of self-righteous superiority, world dominion and erasing diversity**."

Justification: Unnecessary and absurd negative portrayal of Indian civilization.

19 d. Line 868-871

Wording from Draft: ". When Europeans began to visit India in modern times, they used the word "caste" to characterize the social system ~~because of the sharp separation they perceived between groups who did not intermarry and thus did not mix with each other~~."

Proposed edit: **"**When Europeans began to visit India in modern times, they **maliciously** used the word "caste" to **denigrate the very sophisticated and highly evolved social structure which was much advanced compared to what they had seen in Europe. Also Europeans realized that without denigrating the sophisticated Hindu social structure they could not establish a self-righteous claim to colonize and rule over India and also vilifying native culture was their way to impose their religion upon the natives. This was a consistent European practice, to label any different culture as savage, as allegedly only they could possibly be civilized."**

Justification: The proposed wording is historically more accurate and a better reflection of intent. Also the proposed wording makes it easier for teachers and students to understand the history and nature of European interaction with India.

19 e. Line 872-874

Wording from Draft: "~~Caste, however, is a term that social scientists use to describe any particularly unbending social structure, for example, slave-holding society in the American south before the Civil War, which can make the "caste" label offensive.~~"

Proposed edit: **Remove the sentence entirely.**

Justification: Context by association here suggests that the Indian social structure was particularly unbending and/or comparable to slave-holding society in the American south before the Civil War. Both the suggestions are highly objectionable, and I recommend you remove the sentence in its entirety. Neither Jati nor Varna was particularly unbending. The Jati structure was rather dynamic and adoptable and new Jatis would emerge with changing times. Even in present times Jati structure and Jati pride exists, only the meaning of Jati evolves with time.

19 f. Line 874-876

Wording from Draft: "~~Today many Hindus, in India and in the United States, do not identify themselves as belonging to a caste.~~"

Proposed edit: **"Even today many Hindus, in India and in the United States have a strong sense of belonging and pride in their Jati and family traditions, even though the traditions are evolving. This is like American communities or schools having pride in their traditions and mascots. In the United States, Hindus are especially afraid of acknowledging their pride because of social intolerance and institutionalized hostility towards Hinduism. Despite the hostility and intolerance in the United States some Jatis have started voicing their sense of pride in their community, most notably the Patel community, who are notably successful in the United States in hospitability business."**

Justification: Revised wording from the draft is incomplete and misleading. The proposed wording is better reflection of reality. Many of us Hindus believe that the persistence of hostile wording in the narrative towards Hindu social structure is a veiled threat designed to erase our identity, traditions and make us loose our religion and self-pride.

19 g. Line 877-883

Wording from Draft: "~~As in Mesopotamia and Egypt, priests, rulers, and other elites used religion to justify the social hierarchy. The teacher has students draw a social hierarchy pyramid of the varnas and compare that pyramid with the Mesopotamian social hierarchy pyramid they made earlier. In both cases, rulers, political elites (warriors and officials) and priests were on the top of the social hierarchy. This was a common pattern of premodern societies.~~"

Proposed edit: **"Unlike in Mesopotamia and Egypt, the elite class in India did not use religion to justify slavery or other oppressive hierarchical social structure. <u>What was unique about India was that the class most respected in society, the Brahmans were often</u>**

the poorest and did not have the most material possessions. The most wealth was with the Vaishya class who were not Kings, rulers or priests. Vedic society was very unique from other premodern societies in this regard that the pillar powers of society namely Knowledge, Government authority, Wealth and manpower were distributed among different groups of society. The teacher asks the students to find contrast between the Indian social structure where powers were distributed among different groups in society and the hierarchical system prevalent in other parts of the world."

Justification: There is no justification in comparing the Hindu social structure to Egyptian hierarchical structure and slavery. Unlike the civilization of Egypt, the Hindu-Indian civilization is very much alive today and a significant member of the world. There is no reason to vilify or denigrate the Indian civilization by comparing it with Egypt. The proposed wording is better reflection of reality and provides important facts to dispel misinformation prevalent in the school system.

19 h. Line 879-881

Wording from Draft: "The teacher has students draw a social hierarchy pyramid of the varnas and compare that pyramid with the Mesopotamian social hierarchy pyramid they made earlier."

Proposed edit: **"The teacher explains to the students that the Varna system was not a hierarchical system and it is absurd to try and think of varna in hierarchical pyramidal way of the Mesopotamian society."**

Justification: Revised wording from the draft is plain wrong. Proposed wording is what is needed to fix the absurd portrayal.

20. Line 883-885

Wording from Draft: "~~Although ancient India was a patriarchy, women had a right to their personal wealth, especially jewelry, gold, and silver, but fewer property rights than men.~~"

Proposed edit: **"What is most notable about India in this period is that women played a significant role in development of philosophy, society and religion. The challenge of the female Rishi Gargi to Yagvalkya and the subsequent debate in the court of King Janak is the subject of an entire Upnishad. What is most notable is that Gargi, a female scholar was the only person to challenge Yagyavalkya in a large audience of the greatest scholars of that time, and she boldly asserted that if Yagyavalkya could satisfactorily convince Gargi of his completeness of knowledge then entire august learned assembly would accept that as a certificate of approval. In the ensuing debate Gargi did give that approval. Uniquely, some parts of India had matriarchal societies and even today in parts of Kerala, Himalayan foothills and North-east India, matriarchal system exists. In Mahabharata this is mentioned when the Pandava prince Arjuna marries the beautiful princess Chitrangada of Manipur who was raised as a warrior and a heir to the throne in a matriarchal society. Also women in ancient India had special rights to personal wealth such as gold and jewelry."**

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Justification: Women played a significant role in Indian society in development of philosophy and society. India was and still is a colorful civilization with society made up of diverse traditions and matriarchy is not uncommon in India, while this is unheard of in Abrahamic societies.

21. Line 891-892

Wording from Draft: "Rama, his wife Sita, and some other characters ~~always make the correct moral decisions in this epic work~~."

Proposed edit: **"**Rama, his wife Sita, and some other characters **are challenged by critical moral decisions in this epic work."**

Justification: The story of Ramayana is about the challenges faced by the characters in the story with learning opportunities for challenges one could face in various arenas of life. The blanket statement "always make the correct moral decisions in this epic work" is incorrect.

22. Line 893-893

Wording from Draft: "…the crisis over the broken promise of Sugriva, the ~~monkey~~ king..."

Proposed edit: replace the word monkey with **Vanar (or Vanara, correct pronunciation is** वानर **vānara)**. **"**…the crisis over the broken promise of Sugriva, the **Vanara** king....**"**

Justification: The story of Ramayana describes Sugriva as the king of Vanars. The Sanskrit word 'Vanar' is loaded with deep etymological relevance and meaning. Translating Vanar as a monkey entirely fails to capture or translate any of the deep meanings of the word Vanar. Hence simply use the term Vanar, and if necessary describe Vanar as an ancient tribe. While people from Indian culture are perfectly comfortable imagining the Vanar tribe as that of monkey like beings, in the United States the word monkey has connotations that make it unsuitable to be used as a translation of the word Vanar.

21. Line 907-908

Wording from Draft: "In India, through the teachings of Mahavira, Jainism, a religion that encouraged the idea of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, paralleled the rise of Buddhism."

Proposed edit: **"**In India, through the teachings of Mahavira, Jainism, a religion that encouraged the idea of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, **already a key concept in Hindu dharma,** paralleled the rise of Buddhism.**"**

Justification: It is not debatable that reference to ahimsa as a central concept of Hinduism can be found in scriptures, such as the *Upanishads*, dating centuries before the appearance of Mahavira in the 6th century bce. This change acknowledges the original source within Hindu thought.

22. Line 918-920

   Wording from Draft: "~~Beginning his reign with military campaigns, he had a strong change of heart, converted to Buddhism, and devoted the rest of his rule to promoting nonviolence, family harmony, and tolerance among his subjects. The Maurya Empire broke up into small states in the early second century BCE~~."

   Proposed edit: **"He turned to Buddhism at the height of his power, renounced war and pursued a policy of peace towards all countries. As with the Hindu rulers before him, he governed on the basis of moral and ethical principles, especially nonviolence, religious harmony and family solidarity."**

   Justification: Both Hindu and Buddhist kings before and after Ashoka led military campaigns; as well, both Hindu and Buddhist kings promoted nonviolence, religious harmony and family solidarity. The implication of the revised narrative is that these qualities were somehow unique to Ashoka on account of his conversion to Buddhism. This is not historically accurate.

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To,
Thomas Adams,
Executive Director
Instructional Quality Commission
Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division (CFIRD)
California Department of Education
1430 N Street, Room 3207
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sub: Portrayal of Hinduism in 6th grade.

Dear Dr. Thomas Adams,

We are writing as concerned parents of Hindu Californian children from a Hindu-Indian heritage or as Hindu Californians who went through the California school system. We feel it is important that the world history textbooks that California students are reading are up to date and reflect positively on their Religion and cultural heritage.

Hinduism as portrayed in the draft framework for 6th grade is unrecognizable to a practicing Hindu. We are disappointed to note that Hinduism is singled out for negative portrayal and presentation from an exclusively outsider's perspective. It is amazing that while all other religions are presented in a positive light with generous interpretations of their traditions from an insider's perspective, Hinduism is presented in a negative light with exclusive interpretations from the perspective of those that seek to vilify her.

Please bring some sense of fairness and justice in the presentation of Hinduism. It is only fair that Hinduism gets extended the same treatment that other religions have and an insider's perspective of Hinduism is presented. If social problems of Hindu society is attributed to the religion, then the social problems of Abrahamic society needs to be attributed to the Abrahamic religions. Either Hinduism gets the same treatment as other religions or other religions need to be equally presented from an outsider's perspective. Please let us know if you want us to present to you a Dharmic perspective of problems of Abrahamic society for inclusion in the framework. We would prefer to work with you on presentation of Hinduism from insider's perspective.

We urge you to take the necessary steps in this round of Framework revision to correct this egregious and unlawful inequality in treatment of Hindu Religion and Indian civilization. We hope that our children and their classmates will learn meaningful and relevant facts about Hinduism and the contributions of Hindu-India to the World.

Sincerely

Over 2500 signatories